WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method implemented on a computer for allowing a user to set a pronunciation of a string of characters, the method comprising:

allowing the user to select one or more characters in the string;

retrieving from a database accessible by the computer a plurality of samples of words or parts of words representing possible pronunciations of the selected one or more characters and displaying the retrieved samples;

allowing the user to select one of the displayed samples; and

storing a first pronunciation record comprising the string of characters with the selected one or more characters being assigned the pronunciation associated with the sample selected by the user.

2. The method of claim 1, comprising generating a pronunciation of the character string using the pronunciation represented by the sample selected by the user as the pronunciation for the selected one or more characters, and audibly outputting the generated pronunciation.

3. The method of claim 2, comprising allowing the user to select another of the displayed samples after audibly outputting the generated pronunciation.

4. The method of claim 1, comprising allowing the user to select a second of the displayed samples and storing a second pronunciation record comprising the string of characters with the selected one or more characters being assigned the pronunciation represented by the second sample selected by the user.

5. The method of claim 4, comprising, during a text-to-speech process of generating audible output of a text file containing the string of characters, selecting one of the first and second pronunciation records.

6. The method of claim 5, comprising associating the first and second pronunciation files with first and second objects, respectively, and selecting one of the first and second objects, and wherein the step of selecting one of the first and second pronunciation records comprises selected the pronunciation record associated with the selected object.

7. The method of claim 4, comprising, during a speech recognition process, recognizing a pronunciation of the string of characters by a user and selecting one of the first and second pronunciation records which most closely matches the recognized pronunciation.

8. The method of claim 7, comprising associating the first and second pronunciation files with first and second objects, respectively, and selecting one of the first and second objects which is associated with the selected pronunciation record.

9. The method of claim 1, comprising allowing the user to identify a part of the character string as a separate syllable, and wherein the step of storing the first pronunciation record comprises storing data representing the identified separate syllable.

10. The method of claim 1, comprising allowing the user to identify a part of the character string to associate with an accent, and wherein the step of storing the first pronunciation record comprises storing data representing the identified accent.

11. The method of claim 1, comprising receiving the character string as input by the user.

12. The method of claim 1, comprising allowing the user to select the character string from a dictionary database accessible to the computer.

13. The method of claim 1, comprising allowing the user to select a preferred language and wherein the step of retrieving the samples representing possible pronunciations of the selected one or more characters comprises selecting a database for the preferred language from a plurality of language databases and retrieving the samples from the selected database.

14. The method of claim 1, comprising allowing the user to select a second language for the selected one or more characters and retrieving additional word samples from a second database corresponding to the selected second language.

15. An article of manufacture comprising a computer readable medium storing program code for, when executed, causing a computer to perform a graphical user interface method for allowing a user to set a pronunciation of a string of characters, the method comprising:

allowing the user to select one or more characters in the string;

retrieving from a database accessible by the computer a plurality of samples of words or parts of words representing possible pronunciations of the selected one or more characters and displaying the retrieved samples;

allowing the user to select one of the displayed samples; and

storing a first pronunciation record comprising the string of characters with the selected one or more characters being assigned the pronunciation associated with the sample selected by the user.

16. The article of claim 15, wherein the method the program code causes the computer to perform comprises generating a pronunciation of the character string using the pronunciation represented by the sample selected by the user as the pronunciation for the selected one or more characters, and audibly outputting the generated pronunciation.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the method the program code causes the computer to perform comprises allowing the user to select another of the displayed samples after audibly outputting the generated pronunciation.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the method the program code causes the computer to perform comprises allowing the user to select a second of the displayed samples and storing a second pronunciation record comprising the string of characters with the selected one or more characters being assigned the pronunciation represented by the second sample selected by the user.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the method the program code causes the computer to perform comprises, during a text-to-speech process of generating audible output of a text file containing the string of characters, selecting one of the first and second pronunciation records.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the method the program code causes the computer to perform comprises associating the first and second pronunciation files with first and second objects, respectively, and selecting one of the first and second objects, and wherein the step of selecting one of the first and second pronunciation records comprises selected the pronunciation record associated with the selected object.

21. The method of claim 18, wherein the method the program code causes the computer to perform comprises, during a speech recognition process, recognizing a pronunciation of the string of characters by a user and selecting one of the first and second pronunciation records which most closely matches the recognized pronunciation.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the method the program code causes the computer to perform comprises associating the first and second pronunciation files with first and

second objects, respectively, and selecting one of the first and second objects which is associated with the selected pronunciation record.

23. A graphical user interface system for allowing a user to modify a pronunciation of a string of characters, the system comprising:

a dictionary database stored on a memory device comprising a plurality of first character strings and associated pronunciation records;

a pronunciation database stored on a memory device comprising a plurality of second character strings each comprising one or more characters and each associated with a plurality of words, each word having one or more characters which are pronounced in the word in substantially identical fashion to one manner in which the associated second character string may be pronounced;

an input/output system for allowing a user to select one of the first character strings from the dictionary database, to select one or more characters from the selected string, and to select one of the words in the pronunciation database; and

a programmable controller for generating a pronunciation record comprising the selected first character string with the selected one or more characters being assigned the pronunciation associated with the word sample selected by the user.